

## RIDGEFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### School District Profile

<b>School District:</b>	Ridgefield Public Schools	<b>Grades:</b>	PK-12	<b>Enrollment:</b>	5,626
<b>Number of Schools:</b>	9	<b>Education Reference Group (ERG):</b>	A		
<b>Team Leader:</b>	Barbara Lohse Health Educator	<b>Phone:</b>	(203) 438-3744	<b>E-mail:</b>	blohse@ridgefield.org
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**School Health Team in Place before Pilot Project:** No

**School Health Team Members:**

School principal, school food service, parent representative, health educator, physical education teacher and family and consumer sciences teacher

**Other People Who Should Have Been Included on the School Health Team:** None

**Policy Adoption:**

The policies are still being revised and will be brought to board of education by June 2006.

**Number of Times School Health Team Met:** 10      **Length of Each Meeting:** 1 hour

**Continuation of School Health Team after Pilot Completion:**

The School Health Team will include new members and will work on completion of the School Wellness Policy.

**Process for Identifying and Prioritizing Program Improvement Needs:**

Areas for improvement were identified based on the School Health Team's knowledge of current school programs and practices. Our areas of focus included cafeteria food selections and incorporating nutrition into the curriculum.

**Steps Used for Policy Development and Adoption:**

1. Evaluated current inequities and district needs related to nutrition and physical activity, and determined key areas for improvement.
2. Used existing resources to draft policy language, including *Fit, Healthy and Ready to Learn* (NASBE), *School District Nutrition & Physical Activity Model Policy Language* (Rhode Island) and sample policies from other school districts.
3. Provided draft policy language to administration. Revisions were suggested and School Health Team was requested to focus on developing policy language for two key areas, educator/curriculum and cafeteria.
4. Developed two policy subcommittees (curriculum and cafeteria) that will continue to work on policy language for review in January 2006.
5. Will provide policy draft to school district attorney for review in February 2006.
6. Draft back to committees in March 2006 for final revisions.
7. Bring policy to board for approval by June 2006.

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#### **Challenges to the Policy Development Process:**

- Complete district support would better promote our efforts and help gain more momentum for school-level support of policies, particularly in the areas of classroom parties, socials and PTA fundraisers.
- We could not incorporate our health goals (wellness, nutrition and physical activity) with our academic school goals.

#### **Successes with the Policy Development Process:**

- Curriculum writing to include nutrition in Grades 6-8.
- Curriculum writing in physical education which incorporates best practice standards.
- Better communication about our plans and goals to school and community.
- We worked hard to keep the school-to-home link well connected because this is vital to our success.

#### **Critical Resources Needed to Ensure Success with Policy Development:**

- Staff.
- Time to meet and get the work done.
- Funding, if implementation of a policy will cost money.

#### **Characteristics Important to an Effective, Productive and Successful School Health Team:**

- Be proactive and not reactive.
- Be persistent and committed.
- Get to the parent population – they are your best advocates.

#### **Activities Conducted as a Result of Work on the School Nutrition Policies Project:**

- Held two presentations for faculty and students by Dr. David Katz, Yale University.
- Held meetings and presentations for parents.
- Created new nutrition curriculum.
- Formed a permanent school health committee.
- Conducted Staff Wellness Day, followed up with continuous programs for staff members.
- Appearance on local television show to promote health, nutrition and physical activities.
- Received good publicity in local newspaper (four times during the 2004-2005 school year) and in the *Danbury News Times* about what we are doing in our schools to promote health, wellness and physical activity.
- Conducted nutritious food sampling for students using outside vendors during National Nutrition Month (March 2005).

#### **Strategies for Promoting Adoption and Districtwide Support of the Policies:**

- PTA newsletter.
- Local television show, *Ridgefield: Now We're Talking*.
- Parent forums on nutrition and physical activity.
- Presentations at PTA meetings to promote Team Nutrition and how parents can help build a healthier school community.

**Strategies for District Implementation of the Policies:**

- Many of our implementation strategies will be determined once the policy has been adopted. Our vision is that it will start in the cafeteria by offering healthier choices for our students and removing those products that are less healthy. Then we would like to see a change in the way classroom parties and socials provide snacks, because unhealthy foods and beverages are prevalent.
- We plan to focus on the connection between nutrition and academic performance because our district's goals are tied to academic performance. Providing concrete evidence that supports a link between academic performance and nutrition will be a priority.
- We will also be working on getting the support of parents and administration, because their support is a key factor in policy implementation.

**Methods for Evaluating Success of District Implementation of the Policies:**

- Each school will be forming a Wellness Committee, and each school will design and implement programs based on the district policies.
- Each school will conduct a self-evaluation. They will monitor practices and programs and survey staff members, students and parents to see if their expectations were met.

**Recommendations for Success with the Policy Development Process:**

- Include administration and parents on the School Health Team. They are critical to making the process work effectively.
- Provide continued communication between home and school to share information and give updates on the team's progress.
- Work closely with the food service director when determining policies that relate to the school food service program and what foods and beverages should be served in the cafeteria.

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**Policies**

*Ridgefield Public Schools  
Proposed Nutrition and Physical Activities Policies 2005-2006*

**Student Nutrition & Physical Activity**

**Policy Intent/Rationale:**

The Ridgefield Public School District promotes healthy schools by supporting wellness, good nutrition, and regular physical activity as part of the total learning environment. Ridgefield Public Schools supports a healthy environment where children learn and participate in positive dietary and lifestyle practices. Our individual schools contribute to the basic health status of children by facilitating learning through the support and promotion of good nutrition and physical activity. Improved health optimizes student performance and ensures that no child is left behind.

**1. Provide a comprehensive learning environment for developing and practicing lifelong wellness behaviors.**

The entire school environment, not just the classroom, shall be aligned with healthy school goals to positively influence the student's understanding, beliefs and habits as they relate to good nutrition and regular physical activity. Ridgefield Public Schools intends that all students possess the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and maintain healthy habits for a lifetime.

Our plan includes representation from the entire school community. It will include administrators, teachers, students, parents, staff members, food services, nurses, counselors, school board member and members of the community. This will be a necessary component to ensuring that our students maintain wellness and health because it is a team effort.

**2. Support and promote proper dietary habits to students' health status and academic performance.**

All foods available in our schools and at school-sponsored activities during the instructional day should meet or exceed the district nutrition standards. Emphasis should be placed on foods that are nutrient dense per calorie. To ensure high-quality, nutritious meals, foods should be served with consideration toward variety, appeal, taste, safety, and packaging.

**3. Provide more opportunities for students to engage in physical activity.**

A quality physical education program is an essential component for all students to learn about and participate in physical activity. Physical activity should be included in a school's daily education program for grades K through 12. Physical activity should include regular instructional physical education, in accordance with the Connecticut Physical Education Framework, as well as co-curricular activities, and recess.

**4. The Ridgefield Public School District is committed to improve academic performance in high-risk groups so that no child is left behind.**

Educators, administrators, parents, health practitioners and members of our community must consider the critical role student health plays in academic stamina and performance. The Ridgefield Public Schools will adapt our environment to ensure students' basic nutritional needs and physical needs are met. Developing the understanding within the entire school community of the benefits and the relationship between physical activities, good nutrition and learning will only serve to enhance the well-being of our students. Maximizing the potential of our students to

learn and develop as productive, healthy individuals in our society is one of the many goals of Ridgefield Public Schools.

**5. Establish and maintain a districtwide Nutrition and Physical Activity Advisory council with the purposes of:**

- developing guidance to explicate this policy;
- monitoring the implementation of this policy;
- evaluating the policy progress;
- serving as a resource to school sites (e.g., providing lists of healthy incentives, snacks, birthdays, etc.); and
- revising policy as necessary.

It is recommended that a districtwide Nutrition and Physical Activity Advisory Council be established. The Council would meet a minimum of two times annually with Council membership including, but not limited to:

- district food services manager
- dietitian
- local health practitioner
- school nurse representative
- a parent representative from each school
- a student representative from each school
- staff representative from each school
- a school board member
- physical education teacher (co-chair)
- health education teacher (co-chair)
- family and consumer sciences teacher
- district administrative representative (co-chair)
- local community member

Responsibilities of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Advisory Council may include, but not be limited to, oversight of the following:

- implementation of District Nutrition and Physical Activity Standards (See Addendum);
- integration of nutrition and physical activity in the overall curriculum;
- assurance that staff professional development includes nutrition and physical activity issues;
- assurance that students receive nutrition education and engage in rigorous physical activity;
- pursuit of contracts with outside vendors that encourage healthful eating and reduction of school/district dependence on profits from foods of minimal nutritional value; and
- consistent healthful choices among all school venues that involve the sale of food.

The Nutrition and Physical Activity Advisory Council will be responsible for preparing an Annual Report by June 15 of each year that includes, but is not limited to, the following information:

- monthly district menus and meal counts;
- listing of all a la carte, vending, and competitive foods sold by school food service;
- listing of all other sales of foods throughout the district including vending machines, school stores, culinary and special education programs, in-school and in-class fundraisers, etc.; and
- listing of physical activity programs and opportunities for students throughout the school year.

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#### *Student Nutrition*

##### **The School Lunch Program:**

- The school lunch program will continue to follow the USDA Requirements for Federal School Meals Programs.
- The Food Service Program provider will follow Ridgefield Public School District's Nutritional Standards when determining the items a la carte and "competitive foods" sales.
  - A la carte and "competitive foods" items that do not meet the District Nutrition Standards may be acceptable when offered on a very infrequent, intermittent basis and must be recorded in the Annual Report submitted by the Nutrition & Physical Activity Council on or before June 15.
- The food service director will work closely with the Nutrition & Physical Advisory Council.

##### **Cafeteria Environment**

- A cafeteria environment that provides students with a relaxed, enjoyable climate shall be developed.
- The cafeteria environment is a place where students have the following:
  - adequate space to eat with clean and pleasant surroundings;
  - adequate time to eat meals. (The American Food Service Association recommends at least 20 minutes for lunch from the time students are seated with their food); and
  - convenient access to hand washing or hand sanitizing facilities before meals.

##### **Fundraising**

- All fundraising projects are encouraged to follow the District Nutrition Standards.
- All fundraising projects for sale and consumption within and prior to and after the instructional day will follow the District's Nutritional Standards when determining the items being sold.
- PTA activities should abide by the District's Nutrition Standards

##### **Teacher to Student Incentives**

- The use of food items as part of a student incentive program is strongly discouraged. Should teachers feel compelled to use food items as an incentive, they are required to adhere to the District's Nutrition Standards.

##### **School Snacks**

Snacks brought from home by students should be nutritious, including beverages. Teachers should encourage students to adhere to the list of snacks recommended by the District's Nutritional Standards.

### **Student Nutrition Education**

The Ridgefield Public School District has a comprehensive curriculum approach to nutrition in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, all K-12 staff members will be encouraged to integrate nutritional themes from the Connecticut Department of Education Health Education Framework and/or the Connecticut Family and Consumer Sciences Framework into daily lessons when appropriate. The health benefits of good nutrition should be emphasized. These nutritional themes include, but are not limited to:

Knowledge of the Food Guide Pyramid	Healthy heart choices
Sources and variety of foods	Dietary Guidelines for Americans
Diet and disease	Healthy breakfast
Healthy snacks	Understanding calories
Healthy beverages	Food labels
Healthy diet	Multicultural influences
Major nutrients	Proper food safety and sanitation
The importance of making good food choices	Serving sizes
Identifying and limiting foods of low nutrient density	

The District Nutrition Policy reinforces nutrition education to help students practice these themes in a supportive school environment.

### **Parent Nutrition Education**

- Nutrition education will be provided to parents beginning at the elementary level. The goal will be to continue to educate parents throughout middle and high school levels.
- Nutrition education may be provided in district or school newsletters, presentations that focus on nutritional value and healthy lifestyles and through any other appropriate means available for reaching parents.
- Ridgefield Public Schools maintains the belief that the home-school communication link is vital to providing a well-rounded education to our students.

### **Staff Nutrition and Physical Activity Education**

With the purpose of:

Encouraging all school staff members to improve their own personal health and wellness.

- Improving staff morale.
- Creating positive role modeling.
- Building the commitment of staff members to promote the health of students.
- Building the commitment of staff members to help improve the school nutrition and physical activity environment.

Nutrition and physical activity education opportunities will be provided to all school staff members at the elementary, middle and high school levels. These educational opportunities may include, but not be limited to, the distribution of educational and informational materials and the arrangement of presentations and workshops that focus on nutritional value and healthy lifestyles, healthy assessments, fitness activities and other appropriate nutrition and physical related topics.



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#### Addendum

##### **District Nutritional Standards**

The Ridgefield Public School district strongly encourages the sale and distribution of nutrient-dense foods for all school meals, functions and activities. This includes before- and after-school activities, including PTA functions. Nutrient-dense foods are those foods that provide students with calories rich in the nutrient content needed to be healthy. In an effort to support the consumption of nutrient-dense foods in the school setting, the district has adopted the following nutrition standards governing the sale of food, beverage and candy on school grounds. Schools are encouraged to study these standards and develop building policy using the following District Nutrition Standards as minimal guidelines.

##### **Food**

- Encourage the consumption of nutrient-dense foods, i.e., whole grains, fresh fruits, vegetables and dairy products.
- Any given food item for sale prior to the start of the school day and throughout the instructional day will have not more than 30 percent of its total calories derived from fat.
- It is recognized that there may be rare special occasions when the school principal may allow a school group to deviate from these Standards, but those special occasions must be recorded and included in the Nutrition & Physical Activity Council Annual Report.

##### **Beverages**

- Only milk, water and beverages containing 50-100 percent fruit juices with no added artificial or natural sweeteners may be sold on school grounds both immediately prior to and throughout the instructional day. This standard will be phased in over the next three school years in the following way:
  - 2006-2007 School Year: Only milk, water and beverages containing 50-100 percent fruit juices with no added artificial or natural sweeteners may be sold or distributed on school grounds both prior to and during the instructional day in the district's elementary and middle schools.
  - 2007-2008 School Year: Only milk, water and beverages containing 50-100 percent fruit juices with no added artificial or natural sweeteners may be sold or distributed on school grounds both prior to and during the instructional day in the district's high school.

##### **Candy**

Candy is defined as any processed food item that has:

1. Sugar – including brown sugar, corn sweetener, fructose, glucose (dextrose), high fructose corn syrup, honey, lactose, maltose, molasses, raw sugar, table sugar (sucrose) – listed as one of the first two ingredients; and
2. Sugar is more than 25 percent of the item by weight.
  - Vending sales of candy will not be permitted on school grounds
  - Nonvending sales of candy will be permitted ONLY at the conclusion of the instructional day.



### *Student Physical Activity*

The Ridgefield Public School District shall provide physical activity and physical education opportunities aligned with the Connecticut Physical Education Framework that provide students with the knowledge and skills to lead a physically active lifestyle.

The Ridgefield Public School district shall use the following Implementation Strategies:

1. Physical education and physical activity opportunities will be available for all students.
2. Physical activity opportunities shall be offered.
3. As recommended by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), school leaders of physical activity and physical education shall guide students through a process that will enable them to achieve and maintain a high level of physical fitness through the following:
  - expose youngsters to a wide variety of physical activity;
  - teach physical skills to help maintain a lifetime of health and fitness;
  - encourage self-monitoring so youngsters can see how active they are and set their own goals;
  - individualize intensity of activities;
  - focus feedback on process of doing your best rather than on a product; and
  - be active role models.
4. Introduce developmentally appropriate components of a health-related fitness assessment (e.g., Fitness Gram, Physical Best or President's Council) to the students at an early age to prepare them for future assessment.
5. Begin fitness logging in elementary school. Assist students to interpret their personal attainments and compare them to national physical activity recommendations. The 2004 Guidelines from NASPE recommend:
  - Children should accumulate at least 60 minutes and up to several hours of age-appropriate physical activity on all, or most, days of the week.
  - Children should participate in several bouts of physical activity lasting 15 minutes or more each day.
  - Children should participate each day in a variety of age-appropriate physical activities designed to achieve optimal health, wellness, fitness and performance benefits.
  - Extended periods (periods of two hours or more) of inactivity are discouraged for children, especially during the daytime hours.
6. Beginning in middle school and through high school, administer a health-related fitness assessment with students. Students shall receive results and use this as a baseline in understanding their own level of fitness, creating goals and plans, and logging activities identified to achieve goals. Logs should include day, time, type and length of activity, whether the activity was done alone or with others, and how the student felt before and after the activity.
7. Physical education classes shall be sequential, building from year to year; content will include movement, personal fitness, and personal and social responsibility. Students should be able to demonstrate competency through application of knowledge, skill and practice. (NASPE recommends physical education 150 minutes/week for elementary students and 225 minutes/week for middle and high school students.)